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DATE: August 2, 2021

TO: New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

RE: NJDOT Rockfall Mitigation Projects in Warren & Hunterdon Counties Included in Plan 2050 (LRTP) and Fiscal Year 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

FROM: Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council
Submitted by Marion M Kyde Ph.D., Vice Chair

The Lower Delaware River is a nationally designated Wild and Scenic Partnership River. Our Management Council, composed of member governmental entities and non-profit organizations along the River, is responsible for oversight and implementation of the goals of the federally approved management plan. Among the six plan goals are preservation of the natural resources, scenic values of this stretch of the River, and the preservation of important historic resources in the watershed.

NJDOT rockfall mitigation projects as planned in Warren and Hunterdon Counties, are distinctly counter to these goals. The projects are listed in the Fiscal Year 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As currently planned, these projects will destroy remarkable scenic geological formations and Native American historical resources, as well as having negative impacts on River water quality.

Professional comprehensive environmental, historic and archeological impact studies are needed before any mitigation decisions are made. Any exclusions to national environmental regulations should not be permitted. Addressing the visual impact of these projects is absolutely necessary.

Our Council requests that the NJTPA pause funding for these projects until the NJDOT engage cooperative input from the impacted communities in Warren and Hunterdon Counties. This includes engagement with federally designated entities including Delaware River Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Delaware River Scenic Byway, and our Council. Engagement must also include all the impacted municipalities and counties on both sides of the River, many of whom have already passed resolutions regarding the proposed projects.

NJDOT has not shown sufficient data to justify the magnitude of these projects. The costs overwhelmingly outweigh the benefits that are presumed to accrue from the projects. They are universally unpopular in the impacted areas. There are many less invasive and destructive options, if indeed mitigation is needed.

In conclusion, we request that any and all project funding for rockfall mitigation projects in Warren and Hunterdon Counties, as currently proposed, be removed from the Fiscal Year 2022-2025 TIP.